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JUNE 2025

BIKE Magazine for cycling and travel

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CYCLING THE LAKE DISTRICT

CYCLING EVENTS JUNE 2025

DISCOVER CYCLING IN LANCASHIRE

GLASGOW TO FALKIRK

CYCLING ROTTERDAM

THE NORTH WEST

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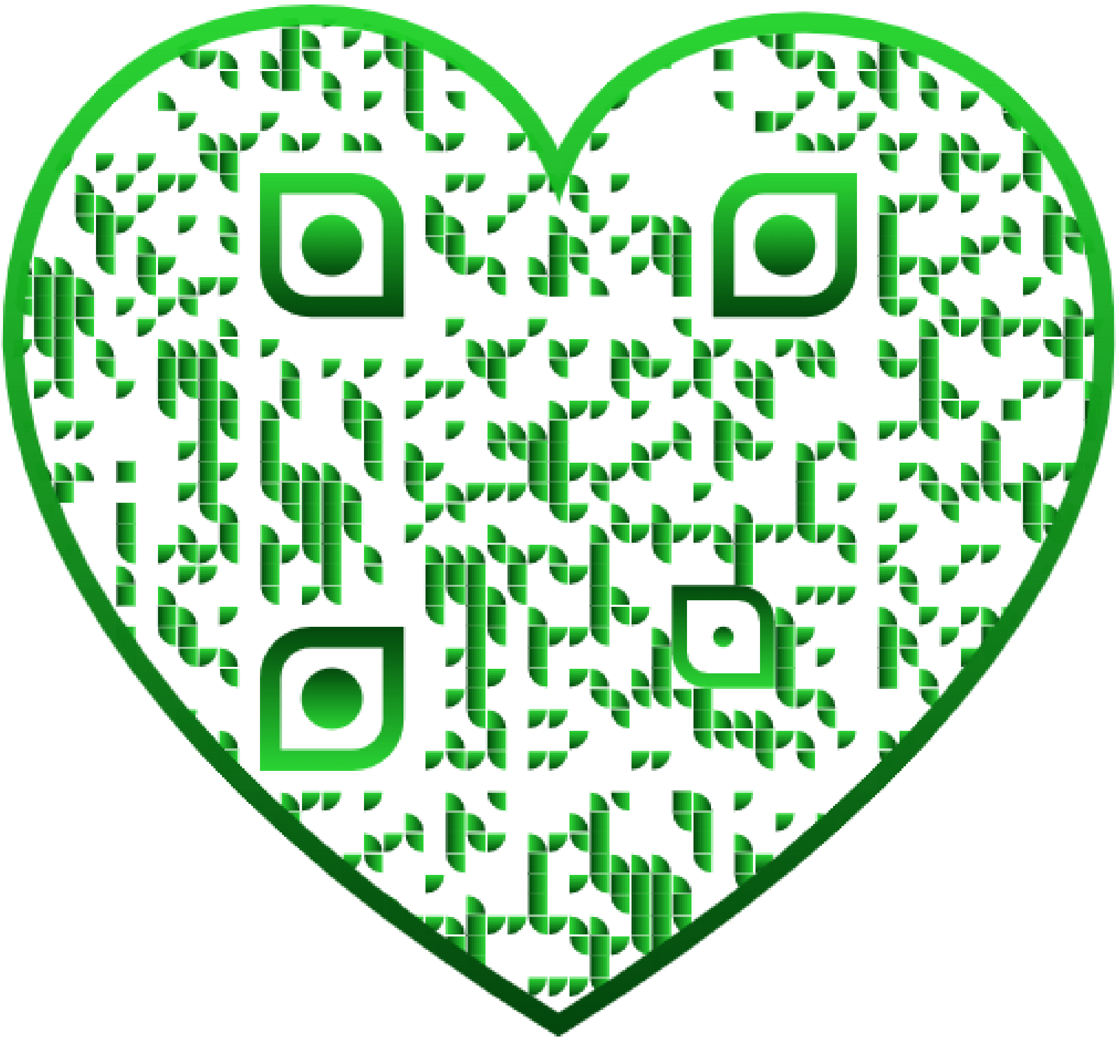

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WELCOME

Nick Branxton
Editor

editor@bike-mag.com

Dear cyclist,

Welcome to the June 2025 edition of BIKE Magazine - your essential companion for all things cycling, adventure, and inspiration on two wheels.

This month, we celebrate the sheer diversity of cycling experiences across the globe. From the rugged trails of the Harz Mountains in Germany to the serene towpaths of Scotland's Forth and Clyde Canal, our contributors have captured the spirit of exploration in every pedal stroke. Gordon Cairns takes us on a reflective journey from Glasgow to Falkirk, weaving history, humour, and the quiet beauty of canal-side cycling into a compelling narrative. Meanwhile, Scot Whitlock immerses us in the märchenhaft charm of Braunlage and the Brocken, where folklore and adrenaline-fuelled descents collide.

June is also a month of major cycling events. We preview the Tour of Britain Women, the Dragon Ride, and the Chase the Sun challenge, alongside international highlights like the Giro d'Italia and the HERO UCI Marathon World Cup in Andorra. Whether you're a competitive rider or a passionate spectator, there's no shortage of action to follow.

For those seeking inspiration closer to home, our features on cycling in the Lake District, Lancashire, and along the Blackpool to Fleetwood promenade offer a wealth of ideas for summer rides. Each route is thoughtfully detailed, blending scenic beauty with practical tips to help you make the most of your time in the saddle.

We also spotlight Hannah Collingridge's superb new guide, The Dirt Directory, a must-have for UK mountain bikers. Her passion for the sport and deep knowledge of trail centres across the country make this book both a practical resource and a heartfelt tribute to the MTB community.

In gear news, the Santini x Pirelli Sport Club collection returns with a stylish nod to cycling heritage, while our fitness column offers smart strategies to maintain your gains as the season shifts.

Finally, I'm thrilled to announce the return of the BIKE Photography Competition! Whether you're capturing the thrill of a mountain descent, the quiet joy of a city commute, or a moment beyond the bike, we want to see your world through your lens. Submit your best shot at www.bike-mag.com/contest and share your story with our global cycling community.

Until next time, ride safe, ride far, and keep the wheels turning.

Nick

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CYCLING EVENTS JUNE 2025

June 2025 promises an exhilarating lineup of cycling events across Britain and Europe

catering to both elite professionals and enthusiastic amateurs. From prestigious races to scenic sportives, here’s a comprehensive guide to the month’s standout cycling occasions.

Tour of Britain Women
5–8 June

The 2025 edition of the Tour of Britain Women is set to be the most competitive yet, featuring a record 18 teams, including 12 UCI Women's WorldTour squads. Starting in Dalby Forest, North Yorkshire, the race traverses the North York Moors and Tees Valley, culminating in a city-centre finale in Glasgow. Top contenders like Lotte Kopecky, Pfeiffer Georgi, and Anna Henderson are among the favourites in this four-day spectacle.

Lloyds National Road Race Championships
29 June

Aberystwyth will host the 2025 British National Road Race Championships. The challenging course features a 23.4 km loop with gradients up to 9.1%, followed by a technical finishing circuit along the seafront. This event will crown the national champions in both men's and women's categories.

Dragon Ride
22 June

Renowned as one of the UK's toughest sportives, the Dragon Ride offers routes ranging from 98 km to 296 km through the scenic climbs of South Wales. Starting in Port Talbot, this event is a must for endurance enthusiasts.

London to Brighton Bike Ride
15 June

Europe's oldest charity bike ride returns, guiding cyclists over 54 miles from the capital to the coast. The route features rolling countryside and concludes on Brighton Beach, attracting thousands of participants annually.

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1218
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Chase the Sun
21 June

This unique coast-to-coast challenge sees riders journey from sunrise in Kent to sunset in Somerset, covering over 200 miles in a single day. It's a test of stamina and determination, set against the backdrop of the UK's diverse landscapes.

Critérium du Dauphiné
8–15 June

A key preparatory race for the Tour de France, the 2025 Critérium du Dauphiné spans eight stages over 1,199.6 km. The route includes hilly terrains, an individual time trial, and challenging mountain stages, offering a comprehensive test for riders.

Italy: A Historic Giro d'Italia

The 2025 Giro d'Italia, the first Grand Tour of the season, is currently underway, featuring a 21-stage course beginning in Durrës, Albania, and concluding in Rome. With reigning champion Tadej Pogačar and other top contenders Jonas Vingegaard and Remco Evenepoel absent, the race is wide open. Isaac del Toro leads wearing the maglia rosa, followed closely by teammate Juan Ayuso, Antonio Tiberi, Simon Yates, and Primož Roglič, all within a two-minute margin.

BIKE

Denmark: Inaugural Copenhagen Sprint

June 2025 marks the debut of the Copenhagen Sprint, a one-day race for both men and women, forming part of the UCI World Tour and UCI Women's World Tour. Set in the flat terrains of Zealand, the race is tailored for sprinters and concludes in the heart of Copenhagen.
Slovenia to Austria: GBI Europe Tour 15–21 June

The Global Biking Initiative's Europe Tour offers cyclists a scenic journey from Venice through Ljubljana to Salzburg. This multi-day ride combines cultural exploration with charitable fundraising, attracting participants from around the world.

June 2025 stands out as a vibrant month for cycling enthusiasts, offering a blend of competitive races and community-driven events across the UK and Europe. Whether you're a professional athlete or a recreational rider, the month's calendar promises opportunities to engage with the sport at every level.

The Hills Are Calling — And This Time, You're Ready

Discover how Richard Hamilton reclaimed his energy, joy, and movement and why thousands trust Turmeric+ to do the same.

Richard Hamilton has always enjoyed exercise, from cycling to work to hitting the gym. But over time, he found it all getting harder – and not just physically.

'I was unable to do the things I enjoyed, like running and cycling,' he says. 'In truth, I felt quite down in the dumps.'

That's when Richard came across Turmeric+. 'I liked the science behind it. I didn't know if it would help, but I thought I'd give it a try.'

Turmeric+, developed in Cambridge, features a unique, patented Curcuma Phospholipid Complex designed for superior absorption – 30 times higher than standard turmeric.

It's the world's most scientifically studied curcumin formulation, backed by over 40 human trials and certified by Informed-Sport. The formula also includes vitamins C and D, which contribute to normal cartilage and muscle function.*

'After about a month, I tried running again, and it felt just like it used to. It's fantastic,' says Richard. 'I take one a day and I'm enjoying running and cycling again. I'm so pleased and would recommend it to anyone.'

Because this isn't just about joint support – it's about getting back to the life you love.

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'I'm so **pleased** and would recommend it to anyone.'

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Product Review

EXPLORING THE UK'S MTB HEARTLANDS: THE DIRT DIRECTORY BY HANNAH COLLINGRIDGE

In the ever-evolving world of mountain biking, where trails are as diverse as the riders who tackle them, The Dirt Directory by Hannah Collingridge emerges as a definitive guidebook for UK-based riders. Published in February 2025, this 176-page compendium is more than just a directory—it's a celebration of the UK's rich and varied mountain biking culture, offering a meticulously curated overview of over 130 purpose-built trail centres and bike parks across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

From a cyclist's perspective, Collingridge's work is both practical and inspiring. Whether you're a seasoned downhill shredder, a cross-country enthusiast, or a weekend warrior looking for your next adventure, this book is a treasure trove of information and insight.

What sets The Dirt Directory apart is the author's deep-rooted connection to the sport. Hannah Collingridge isn't just a writer—she's a lifelong cyclist, racer, mechanic, and advocate. Her passion for mountain biking pulses through every page. Having contributed to respected publications like Cranked, Cycle, and Single-track, and authored the acclaimed Pennine Bridleway guide, Collingridge brings both credibility and authenticity to this project.

Her tone is friendly yet authoritative, and her attention to detail reflects a rider's eye for what truly matters: trail variety, technical difficulty, facilities, and local character. She doesn't just list locations—she paints a picture of each one, helping readers imagine the terrain, the vibe, and the kind of ride they can expect.

The book's structure is intuitive and rider-focused. Each trail centre entry includes:

- Trail types and difficulty levels (from green family loops to black-graded descents)

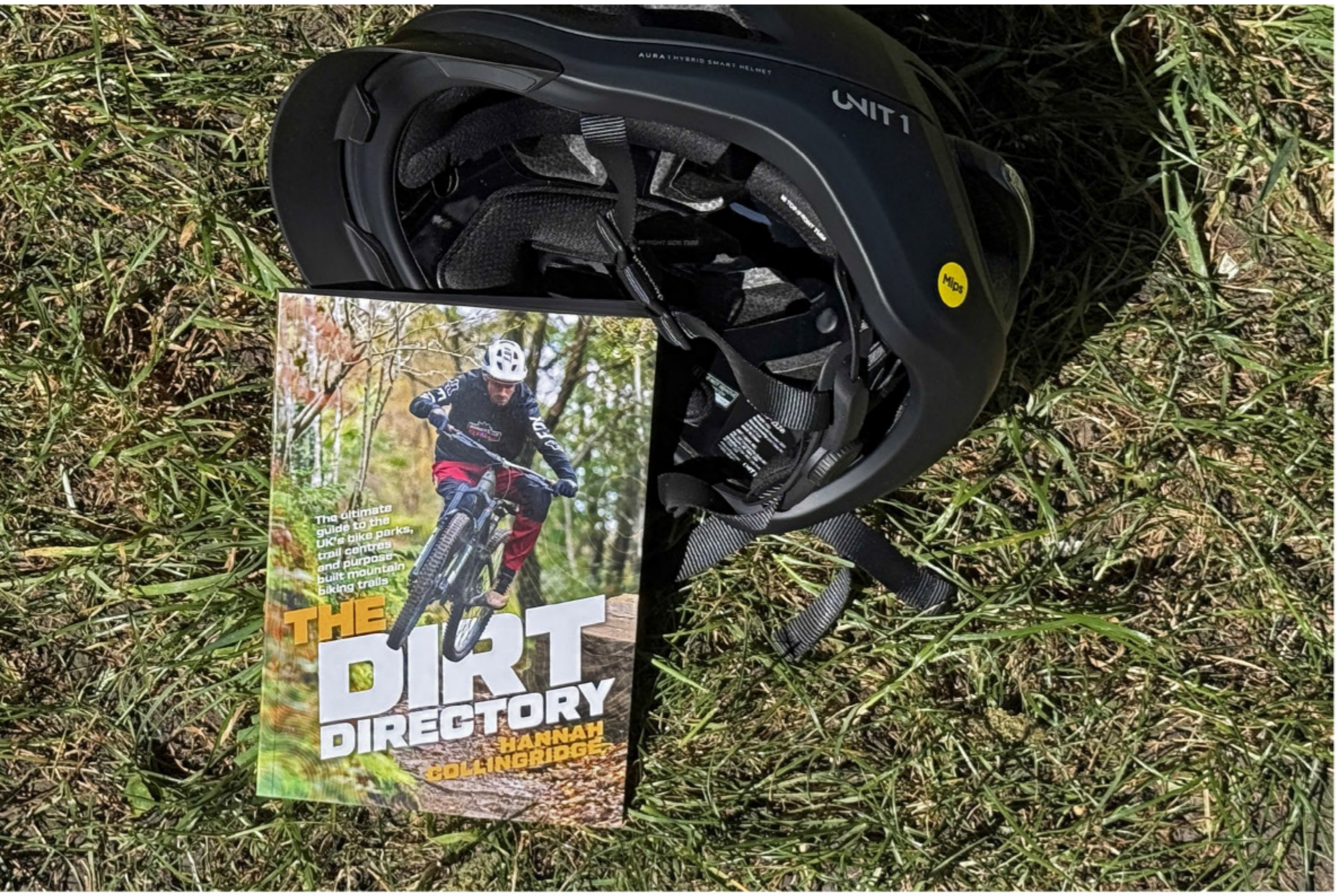
- Facilities such as parking, bike hire, cafes, and uplift services

- Local tips and nearby amenities

- Photographic highlights that capture the energy and beauty of each location

This makes the book not only a planning tool but also a source of inspiration. It's the kind of guide you keep in your van or backpack, ready to consult on a whim when the urge to explore strikes.

One of the book's greatest strengths is its geographic and stylistic diversity. It covers iconic destinations like BikePark Wales, Glentress, and Dalby Forest, but also shines a light on lesser-known gems such as Lady Canning's Plantation and Grenoside Woods—volunteer-run centres that embody the grassroots spirit of UK mountain biking.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Mips
The ultimate guide to the UK's bike parks, trail centres and purpose built mountain biking trails
THE DIRT DIRECTORY
HANNAH COLLINGRIDGE

The inclusion of newer venues like Dyfi Bike Park, developed by the Athertons, shows that Collingridge is not just documenting history but capturing a living, breathing scene that continues to grow and evolve. This balance between the established and the emerging makes the book relevant for both newcomers and veterans of the sport.

Beyond its utility, The Dirt Directory is a joy to read. The action photography is dynamic and immersive, showcasing riders in full flow against the backdrop of the UK's varied landscapes—from forested single-track to rugged moorland descents. These images do more than decorate the pages; they evoke the thrill and freedom that define mountain biking.

Collingridge's writing also carries emotional weight. Her descriptions often reflect a personal connection to the places she writes about, whether it's the buzz of a race day or the quiet satisfaction of a solo ride through the woods. This emotional resonance elevates the book from a mere guide to a love letter to the sport.

What makes The Dirt Directory particularly valuable is its inclusivity. It doesn't assume a high level of technical skill or fitness. Instead, it caters to a broad spectrum of riders, from families looking for safe, scenic loops to adrenaline junkies chasing the next big drop. This accessibility is crucial in a sport that can sometimes feel intimidating to newcomers.

Moreover, the book's emphasis on facilities—like bike hire and beginner-friendly trails—makes it easier for people to get started. It's a subtle but important contribution to making mountain biking more welcoming and sustainable.

In a digital age where trail info is often scattered across apps and forums, The Dirt Directory offers something refreshingly tangible and trustworthy. It's a book made by a rider, for riders—a tactile companion that invites exploration and rewards curiosity.

Whether you're planning a weekend trip, dreaming up a summer road tour, or simply looking to discover new trails close to home, Hannah Collingridge's guide is an indispensable resource. It captures the spirit of UK mountain biking in all its muddy, exhilarating glory.

Verdict: 9/10 – A must-have for any UK mountain biker's bookshelf or glovebox.

You can get it from https://www.adventurebooks.com/products/the-dirt-directory

GLASGOW TO FALKIRK

Cycling reporter Gordon Cairns treats us to the delights of canal cycling, recapturing a former world as he goes

An off-road cycle across Scotland's densely populated centre belt from the country's largest city to its culturally most important may sound implausible, but by following an 18th Century super-highway, it can be done. My bike ride from Glasgow to the Falkirk Wheel along the Forth and Clyde Canal is more or less half way across the centre of the country, yet it gets to be so peaceful as to be almost soporific. The path continues in the same vein across to Edinburgh. The only stressful element about this route is getting to the starting point at Port Dundas in the north of Glasgow as there is no designated cycle path through the city centre, so I have to battle it out with the city's buses, taxis and jay walking hen parties on a busy Saturday afternoon.

Port Dundas is a platform that looks down onto the north of the city from above the motorway and also offers a view of all of the important towers in the city's west-end from the University of Glasgow to the Free Church College Tower. On the other side of the canal is Spiers Wharf; originally used to mill and store grain in the 19th Century which had been brought into the city by barge. These imposing buildings were converted into loft spaces in 1989, when being called a yuppie was seen as an insult rather than an aspiration.

The canal was built 200 years before that, connecting Glasgow to the Union Canal coming from Edinburgh and the sea at Grangemouth which allowed goods to be imported from the North Sea countries into the west of Scotland. It was even used by the east coast Forth River fishing fleet to cross the country and fish in the Irish Sea. The introduction of the railway system in the 19th century first acted as a competitor for the canal but then sounded its death knell as trains moved passengers and goods more quickly and cheaper than a system of barges ever could.

For a spell the Forth and Clyde was allowed to become derelict with parts filled in and new bridges built which blocked barges passing through the waterway. However at the turn of the last century, it was decided to regenerate the canal at a cost of £86m with the Falkirk Wheel as its centrepiece as a grand millennium project. Now the income is generated from tourism rather than business, although earlier attempts at opening the canal for leisure weren't so successful.

I remember a friend working for the canal board a decade before the major regeneration work began when it opened up a section of this long moribund canal in the north of Glasgow and celebrated with a sailing a barge along a stretch of the water, full of local dignitaries drinking champagne and eating canapés. I don't know if his tale was apocryphal, but he described some local small boys throwing sticks and reeds at the boat as it passed by, like something out of 'Heart of Darkness' as the natives see a boat in their own territory for the first time and have to attack it.

Leaving the heart of the city, the canal first heads west, passing behind Partick Thistle's football ground which sits just in front of the Firhill basin in Maryhill. I get a birds-eye view into the ground, although if the bird is a fan of football it might want to look away when Thistle are at home. Further into Maryhill, the canal splits in two at the Stockingfield Junction, with one section heading further west down to Bowling on the Clyde. In order to

continue east to Falkirk, I need to come down from the canal side and then ride underneath it at Lochburn Road before cycling back up the embankment. Following the canal west is also recommended, as it gives you two options; first coming off of the canal just before it passes over the River Kelvin on a grand aqueduct, and then following the river into the city's west end; full of interesting shops and pleasant bars and cafes. Alternatively you can ride pass Bowling and follow National Cycle Network Route Seven down to Loch Lomond at the town of Balloch.

The quality of the path I choose is variable from the rough to the very rough and I almost immediately regret choosing to ride on a road bike, as the first stretch at Spiers Wharf is cobblestoned. The next section is gravel, not ideal for road bikes and very noisy and then I traverse across mud, a narrow section of hard-packed earth which makes passing other riders difficult followed by a stony path where I fondly recall the gravel sections. Perhaps this is because Scottish Canals focused their attention on the water rather than the land. And the water has certainly been open up to different activities, with kayaking, sailing or rowing all on offer at different points along the canal, from Pinkston Basin in Glasgow through to Auchinstarry Marina near Kilsyth.

Despite the poor surface, the flatness of the path and the lack of barriers across it are encouraging me to ride faster, in fact for sections of the ride I feel I could be on a treadmill as I pick up speed without much resistance. I am also enjoying the benefit of the prevailing wind, which tends to blow from west to east in Scotland, and I seem to be having an easier ride than the oncoming cyclists, some of whom are puffing hard. Every so often there are notices reminding us cyclists to control our speed and so I carefully slow down when approaching other tow path users.

Today the sun is high in the early evening sky, casting a strong clear light on the prettified landscape littered with passers-by in their garishly luminous sportswear making it difficult to associate the canal with the bleak existential thriller 'Young Adam', written by the Scottish beat author Alexander Trocchi, which is set on these waters. Later turned into a movie starring Ewan McGregor and Tilda Swinton, it tells of a disillusioned young man working on a barge in the 1950s who pulls the dead body of a pregnant young woman from the water. It has been described as a Scottish equivalent of 'The Outsider' by Albert Camus.

Now the barges are full of tourists on boat cruises from Kirkintilloch and Falkirk enjoying the sun rather than brooding young men with murderous thoughts. The largest group who are engaging with the water are actually standing on the canal banks, fishing. I wonder what the attraction for these men is, and yes it is only men. I see a few of the fish which have been tricked out of the water and I don't think there would be much eating in them, nor is there much scope for quiet contemplation. Out near the village of Twechar, a great name to get your mouth around, I see a rather jolly looking, red-faced chap casting his line into the water. As I cycle closer he greets me rather cheerily and then I notice the cause of his merriment, a bottle of very strong fortified wine of a type very popular in this part of Scotland, lies next to him. The next few fishermen I pass are also enjoying the same refreshment. I decide that this is what allows them to sit for hours in the pursuit of the inedible; they are in an alcoholic daze.

The canal path at Kirkintilloch comes over the bridge rather than under and I pass a group of charity cyclists stepping out of a pub looking well refreshed. This town is almost the last place to get any type of refreshment before you get to the Falkirk Wheel 14 miles away, so it might be a logical place to stop, although the marina at Auchinstarry does boast Scotland's first eco-pub. The original sloggers on this canal path were the horses which pulled the barges along,

needing stables with hay and board at regular intervals. The imaginatively titled The Stables, was originally built for the horses 200 years ago, but already has a number of bikes parked outside its beer garden as cyclists indulge the hunger, or thirst, they have worked up.

The number of dog walkers and cyclists drop off after Twechar and the canal meanders across what used to be the industrial heartland of Scotland through fertile fields of farmland. The canal banks are lined with trees and the raised path I am travelling down gives me a good view of the land below. As I hit a straight stretch and see the water roll on for miles in front of me, I begin to imagine this journey in the past, quietly carried along by the current and a strong horse, although perhaps my image of the 19th Century may be slightly romanticised. I suppose the reality would be an animal used as a machine to support the livelihood of the barge family; the poor beast having been worked very hard.

Although the Falkirk Wheel can be seen for miles, from the canal it is hidden until I turn a corner from what is a quite stretch of waterway into a visitor centre, ice cream vans and at the centre of it all, the aptly-named Wheel - a giant chain-link shape of a wheel. This concrete structure connects the Forth and Clyde Canal with the Union Canal, 35m higher and it makes it possible to travel from Glasgow to Edinburgh by boat.

I can't feel the local football team, Falkirk, have missed a trick by preferring to keep a steeple of a local landmark on their club badge rather than this iconic shape. Its green credentials are impeccable; using Archimedes principle of displacement, each arm of the wheel acts as a counterbalance and so the wheel turns using very little electricity. The trip on the wheel itself lasts 50 minutes and costs almost £8, perhaps the World's most expensive Ferris wheel until the arrival of the London Eye.

Unfortunately, the wheel is only used for holiday barges as it would take the best part of a week to travel between the two cities.

Although the Kelpies, which are described as the two largest equine sculptures in the world are at the end proper of the Forth and Clyde canal at Carron and only a few more miles away, I decide to save the trip for another day and use the landmark of the Falkirk Wheel as the logical place to end my journey and so head for the nearest mainline train station. I ride the slope up to the Union Canal, which stops mid-air above me in a concrete viaduct connected to the wheel.

As part of the millennium project to build the wheel, the Rough Castle tunnel, which I at first misread as roughcast, thinking it is a description of the walls, was dug for the boats to pass through underneath the Antonine Wall, a Roman construction built to mark the Northernmost frontier of the empire, and so save it. Like the Forth and Clyde Canal, the Roman wall stretched across the centre of Scotland like a belt and was at the cutting edge of technology of its time. The tunnel is named after Rough Castle Fort, which is about a 15-minute walk away from the wheel and is described as the best preserved section of the wall. I pass through the tunnel at the same time as a barge, which sails serenely on at 4mph.

Coming out of the tunnel, I now follow the Union Canal for about two miles before a sign directs towards Falkirk High train station, whose entrance is about 50m away down a grassy slope. This station is on the main Glasgow-Edinburgh line and has spaces for bikes without needing to book in advance. And so I sit back and swiftly cover the 28 miles I have just cycled along, on the form of transport that made these canals obsolete over a century ago.

BIKE PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

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or a completely non-cycling masterpiece, we want to see your best shot!

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GERMAN CYCLING

Text and photos by Scot Whitlock

Stunning can be an over-used adjective, its impact diluted, however this is not the case with the Harz Mountains. I was only a temporary visitor with a few days in the resort which had been organised by Germany Travel.

The area oozes a dreamlike and mystical power, it is quite simply the land of German fairy tales (märchenhaft), steep-roofed houses with tiny windows and narrow, cobblestone streets, dark forests, rushing streams, grandoise mountains, and plenty of witches. The hedges, ski lifts, houses and shops all hide the gnarled faces as they watch the daily rituals of life. There is something familiar about these little towns tucked away in deep, wooded valleys. It's no wonder the Brothers Grimm collected their inspirations from the area around Kassel about 40 miles to the west, but the Harz Mountains have long been famous as an important source of German folklore.

I had endured a energy sapping early BA flight from London Heathrow to Hannover and then a collection of bus and train journeys before my arrival in Braunlage. The Harz National Park is now a vast playground dominated by outdoor pursuits whatever the season. The old traffic-free border zone has evolved into a rich wildlife reserve. Lynx have ousted witches as the national park's emblem.

Deutsche Bahn allow you to explore further than Braunlauge, there are plenty of picturesque places to stop. I had an open ticket from the train company which gave me complete freedom. I did stop briefly in Goslar but the train is without the best way to travel. In hindsight I wish I'd had enough time to explore other towns along my train route, but I was keen to get started.

I was staying at the Relexa Hotel Harz-Wald (Karl-Röhrig-Straße 5a, 38700 Braunlage; +49 5520 8070) perfectly located on the outskirts of Braunlage at the foot of Mount Wurmberg, which is the second highest peak in the Harz (971m). My room was spacious, contemporary with stunning views.

The town of Braunlage is a lovely and relaxing place to explore, there are plenty of establishments to eat and drink. The streets adorned with the blossoms of spring and the fate murmur of cascading water. The air is fresh and invigorating, the locals friendly. Its a great place to spend time, even with presence of folklore around every corner.

Day One

After a much needed early night I was rejuvenated and desperate to get on two wheels. A bike had been arranged with (E-) MTB-Verleih & Skischule Harz (Am Brunnen 3, 38700, Braunlage; 05520 9998892) which has two locations for E-MTB and MTB rental in Braunlage and St.Andreasberg. They provide a great service and have a good selection of bikes. My Focus Whistler was a joy to pedal, handled well with proficient braking.

The plan was to explore the Bike Park in the town which provides seven unique downhill tracks on Mount Wurmberg. With a combined length of 4,500 metres at an altitude of 972 metres at the summit and a downhill drop of 411 metres between mountain and valley, with jumps and racetracks, it will keep all abilities occupied and concentrated.

The weather was glorious, the ski lifts brimming with gleeful visitors on their mechanically ascent to the summit of the Wurmberg. However incomparison my journey was one of 'simple' leg power. The bike offers a total of about 18km of bike trails for young and old, beginner or professional and are all largely natural and use the specific topography of the Wurmberg area.

The climbing was relatively easy, but if you want the adrenalin fuelled descent (cheaters) without the arduous climb then the ski lift (6-person gondola) is on hand. It climbs approximately 400 metres to take riders from the valley to the peak. Near to the top mountain station, there are two start-gate platforms, which give access to the trails. The terrain from the start to the middle station is steep and then flattens out slightly.

As well as the Bike Park, another popular destinations for mountain bikers is the Volksbank Arena. The 74 mountain bike trails covering 2,200 kilometres and 59,000 metres in altitude across three federal states. You can start your tour in 31 villages, making it a paradise for cyclists and all types of outdoor enthusiasts.

The Volksbankarena Harz's network of cycle routes includes a collection of clearly signposted mountain bike trails in the Lower Saxon districts of Goslar and Osterode and in Sachsen-Anhalt and Thüringen. Among these, exciting cycle trails such as the Höhenfieber (High Fever) trail or the Wild Man's Trail await. Families and beginners will also get their money's worth on the Kleine Wasser-Tour (Little Water Tour) or the Kleine Mönchsrunde (Little Monk's Circuit). The magnitude of this pedallers paradise is impressive, opening up an area of more than 40 x 40 kilometres.

Harzer Hexenstieg 0,2 km
Elend 6,3 km
St. Andreasberg 9,9 km
3
FOCUS

As I approached the summit I was mesmerised by golden sun-rays shooting through the dark green of the firs. The far reaching views were soporific.

Oh my god the descent was a riotous joy, the complete scene of isolation was invigorating, the surface was testing, my tyres groaned against the dirt and debris. I love this time of year, the landscape finally decimating the desolation of winter, replaced by the greens and vibrant colours of spring.

I followed a well-defined track which contoured into the mountain, the going was smooth and remarkably fast. What followed was a thrilling descent on a rather bumpy track and with some heavy braking I arrived at the still bustling ski lift station. My senses filled with the scent of pinewood.

Day Two

The legendary summit of the Brocken was my destination, and the Brocken for most Germans is no ordinary peak. Steeped in European folklore, the Harz Mountains' fabled crown has starred in some of Germany's greatest literature and art. The setting for one of the most famous scenes in Goethe's Faust. The devil takes Faust up on the Brocken on Walpurgis Night to tempt him, where he watches a wild night of revelry among the witches and other evil creatures. "Tonight the mountain's mad with magic" Fausts words resonate through the gorges.

Once again the weather was behaving, and I set off early in an attempt to miss the crowds. The mountain is popular with hikers with a difficult full day tour with steep climbs on asphalt. The starting point was once again the lower station of the Wurmberg cable car. Until the end of the 1980's Germany and Europe were actually divided between these two mountains.

From Wurmberg, my riding continued now on a graveled forest trail, once again the isolation was intoxicating, and would even be manageable on a road bike.

As I entered Schierke, the summit became visible. My experience was a tough slog onwards, this is the beginning of the Upper Harz (Hochharz) National Park. I heard but didn't see rushing water. I began to climb steeply. Although its elevation of 1,141 metres (3,743 ft) the Brocken is below alpine dimensions, its microclimate resembles that of mountains of about 2,000 m (6,600 ft).

Brocken road seemed closed to motorised traffic, the surface is good and at an average gradient of 6%, I was making good progress. Suddenly I hit (not literally) a influx of hiking interlopers, I was now closing in on the mesmeric Brocken.

The peak above the tree line tends to have a snow cover from September to May, and mists and fogs shroud it up to 300 days of the year. The mean annual temperature is only 2.9 °C (37.2 °F). It is the easternmost mountain in northern Germany; travelling east in a straight line, the next prominent elevation would be in the Ural Mountains in Russia.

Once again the descent was rousing, with the highlight an uninterrupted 6-7 km plunge. I was travelling at speed, and for no apparent reason, my bike suffered a speed wobble. The only way to rectify the issue was to sit up from my saddle, throw my weight onto the pedals and transfer more weight into my handlebars. Thankfully, it worked and I continued briefly with less confidence.

The trail now rose continuously

Willkommen
de - www.bikepark-braunlag
Betriebszeiten
Betriebszeit ab
Beginning
8:45
Letzte Bergfahrt
Last trip up
16:10
Letzte Kontrollfahrt des Pistenpersonals
Last control of skipatrol
Hinweise
Krombacher
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Wurmberg 971 m
Bergstation
WC
B
A
Talstation 567 m
Braunlage
Krombacher
Krombacher Weizen Alkoholfrei
Krombacher Radler Alkoholfrei
Kromb
ALKOH
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K 04
5.4
1,55
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1,65
FOCUS

FOCUS
ROCKSHOX

for just over 10 kilometres. At first it was a gentle incline, but the gradient stiffened and provided a challenge up to Dreieckiger Path. Thankfully this was the last of any significant exertions. A short windswept descent followed as I breezed back to base.

The Harz mountain bike route network is signposted according to a simple principle. It avoids large and unnecessary signs in the forest in the interests of nature and landscape protection.

All of the routes are classified into three levels of difficulty– easy (blue), medium (red) and difficult (black).

You can find the starting point for your MTB tour under "MTB routes ordered by starting point". At each starting location there is a central starting point with an overview map showing all the routes.

In addition to this, there are some other places where you can easily join the MTB routes, although their actual starting point is somewhere else – for example in Wildemann or Hahnenklee. These places can also be found under "MTB routes ordered by starting point".

To identify the towns and villages where the tours start, each route is labelled with a letter and a number. So, for example, G stands for Goslar, where 5 routes begin: G 1 to G 5. In the Upper Harz, Altenau and Clausthal-Zellerfeld are the starting locations for the routes O 1 to O 11.

On all the routes you will find similar direction signs, which are not labelled for each individual route. When you have decided on a particular route, follow the direction signs to the left, right or straight on.

Only where multiple routes run parallel to each other, and it is necessary, will you find direction signs with a label for each of the routes.

At particularly central places along the way, you will find main signs with an overview of the distances:

Getting there

BA (0844 493 0787; britishairways.com) flies Heathrow to Hannover, Flybe (0871 700 2000; flybe.com) flies from Manchester, Birmingham and Southampton to Hannover; KLM (0871 231 0000; klm.com) has reasonably priced connections from many British airports.

Trains from Hannover airport to Goslar take 90 minutes (www.bahn.com) €40/£34 return.

The Harz is a good region for exploring by car: P&O Ferries (0871 664 2121; poferries.com) has daily overnight sailings Hull/Rotterdam. DFDS Seaways (0871 522 9955; dfdsseaways.co.uk) has daily overnight sailings Newcastle/Amsterdam. Stena Line (0844 770 7070; stenaline.co.uk) has twice-daily sailings Harwich/Hook of Holland.

Getting around

The Harz Narrow-Gauge Railway (0049 (0) 3943 5580; www.hsb-wr.de) covers all the highlights of the eastern Harz – principle termini in Quedlinburg and Wernigerode. Day tickets covering the whole network, including the Brocken summit, cost €42/£36 – children half price; family tickets for two adults and three children cost €81/£69. Three- or five-day network passes cost €64/£55 and €99/£85 – children half price. Good bus services from Goslar get you around the western Harz.

The Harz region is a walkers' paradise; well-marked forest trails lead from everywhere to everywhere. Longer-distance walks are The Witches Way, 60 miles east to west, and The Old Border Way, which follows the old fence for 50 miles.

When to go

From spring green to autumn gold, the region has attractions all year, including winter sports. Gets crowded during German school holidays, mid-July to mid-August and mid-October.

For more information see www.germany.travel or www.harzinfo.de

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RACE TO GLORY IN THE PYRENEES

The HERO UCI Marathon World Cup Heads to Andorra

On June 1, 2025, the majestic Pyrenees will roar to life with the sound of spinning wheels and gritty determination as the second stage of the 2025 HERO UCI Cross-country Marathon World Cup kicks off in Naturland, Andorra. Nestled in the rugged beauty of Sant Julià de Lòria, this challenging leg of the World Cup series promises heart-stopping competition, technical mastery, and breathtaking scenery — everything that defines modern mountain biking at its peak.

After a thrilling opener on the Italian island of Elba, the attention now shifts to the Andorran highlands where elite riders will test their limits on a 60-kilometre course with a punishing 1,984 meters of elevation gain. This stage isn't just a race — it's a battle between power and precision, endurance and courage, played out in one of Europe's most stunning natural amphitheaters.

TORPADO
KENDA
2
FABIAN RABENSTEINER

A World-Class Stage

The event takes place during the Bike Show Naturland, a premier mountain biking festival, making it not only a major athletic contest but a celebration of MTB culture. Albert Balcells, CEO of Ocisport, the organising force behind the event, underscores its importance: "We are very proud to have the HERO UCI World Cup Marathon at the Bike Show Naturland. The arrival of the top competition of the discipline is a sign of the good work Ocisport has done for the world of MTB in the last two decades."

Andorran terrain is notoriously demanding. The Naturland circuit will put every rider's abilities to the test — from explosive sprinting on open tracks to navigating the technical descents and climbs of the Pyrenees. "The course is tough and has everything to offer a show at the level of the competition," Balcells adds. "It's a combination of fast parts where watts will be key, and technical areas where skill will be essential."

UCI HERO MARATHON WORLD CUP
RACE TO GLORY
UCI
megamo
Buff

The Ones to Watch

Leading the women's race is Dutch powerhouse Rosa van Doorn, fresh off her stage win in Capoliveri. Racing for Buff-Megamo, van Doorn's dominance in Italy has made her the woman to beat. But Andorra will be no cakewalk. Close on her heels are Bosnia's Lejla Njemcevic and Germany's Adelheid Morath — both of whom showed formidable form on Elba, taking second and third respectively.

And then there are the wild cards: Italy's Sandra Mairhofer and Namibia's Vera Looser. Both had disappointing performances in the first stage, but their determination to regain ground in Andorra could shake up the podium. With valuable World Cup points at stake, every pedal stroke will matter.

The men's field is no less exciting. Belgium's Wout Alleman, who stole the spotlight in Capoliveri, is set to defend his leader's jersey. But breathing down his neck are Italy's Gioele De Cosmo and Fabian Rabensteiner of the Torpado Kenda FSA team, second and third in the current overall standings. Each brings a unique blend of grit and tactical brilliance.

Veterans Leo Paez of Colombia and Andreas Seewald of Germany — both former world champions — add an extra layer of intensity to the race. And don't count out Switzerland's Casey South, returning with renewed vigour after recovering from a crash at Cape Epic. With so much talent packed into one peloton, this stage has all the ingredients for a historic showdown.

Beyond the Race

While the elite battle it out on the trails, the HERO UCI Marathon World Cup continues to grow in global significance. It's more than a series of races — it's a showcase of the sport's finest athletes, a platform for innovation in endurance cycling, and a beacon for the growing mountain biking community.

Events like the Naturland stage serve not only to crown champions but also to spotlight host regions, drawing international attention and tourism to areas like Andorra. The fusion of sport and nature, competition and culture, is part of what makes the HERO World Cup such a unique phenomenon.

Looking Ahead

As riders prepare to face the unforgiving climbs and tricky descents of the Andorran stage, fans around the world wait with bated breath. Who will rise? Who will falter? And who will seize the opportunity to etch their name into mountain biking history?

One thing is certain: the Pyrenees will echo with the stories of resilience, speed, and heart. Whether you're watching from the trailside or tuning in online, the second stage of the 2025 HERO UCI Marathon World Cup is not to be missed.

For full rankings and updates, visit www.heroucimarathonworldcup.com

ROLLING HERITAGE FORWARD

Santini x Pirelli Unveil 2025 Sport Club Cycling Kit

In a marriage of speed, heritage and sartorial finesse, Italian titans Santini Cycling and Pirelli Design have once again joined forces to launch the 2025 "Santini x Pirelli Sport Club" collection — a sleek, retro-modern capsule celebrating the legacy of cycling through the lens of iconic Italian design.

Following the success of their inaugural 2024 collaboration, this year's line takes inspiration from the Pirelli Sport Club, originally founded in 1922 to promote physical well-being among employees. But make no mistake — this is no nostalgia trip. It's a striking blend of vintage aesthetic and high-performance modern materials.

At the heart of the collection are two new unisex jerseys, each steeped in visual cues from the swinging '60s. The "Ruota" jersey — named for the Italian word for wheel — features a dynamic circular motif that evokes motion and energy. Its ultra-light, form-fitting fabric hugs like a second skin, while a silicone wheel-shaped detail on the back nods to its heritage.

Alongside it, the "Tape" jersey bursts with horizontal stripes inspired by archival Pirelli advertising. Made from advanced Polartec® Power Stretch™, it comes with raw-cut sleeves, reflective accents and a hidden zip — the sort of thoughtful detailing that defines Santini's reputation among pros and weekend warriors alike.

Both jerseys are available in classic monochrome colour-ways — black or white — and are designed to pair seamlessly with the Pirelli SC shorts, vest, windbreaker, and accessories carried over from the 2024 line. For those seeking comfort off the bike, a curated range of casual garments, ideal for pre- or post-ride lounging, will be released in late June.

Beyond mere kit, this collection represents a deeper synergy between two Italian icons. With Pirelli's cycling history dating back to its first-ever tyre — the "Tipo Milano" in 1893 — and Santini's six-decade legacy in cycling apparel, both brands are united by an unwavering commitment to innovation, craftsmanship, and the culture of cycling.

Expect to see the Santini x Pirelli Sport Club range making waves on roads, race circuits, and coffee stops alike this summer.

Available from:
www.santinicycling.com

Jersey Prices: Ruota - £130

Tape - £110

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CYCLING ROTTERDAM

Text and photos by Scot Whitlock

It's definitely not Liverpool or Rome

Mention the City of Rotterdam and I subconsciously start to hum the chorus of the House Martins annoyingly catchy hit. ('This could be Rotterdam or anywhere, Liverpool or Rome, 'cause Rotterdam is anywhere, anywhere alone...) However, you will be far from 'alone' in this energetic metropolis. It's the unsung hero of the Netherlands and has been in the shadows of Amsterdam for far too long. Rightly recognised as the architectural city of Holland, it seamlessly stimulates innovation and creativity. Its skyline is constantly changing, dominated by the clean gleaming lines of its skyscrapers (uncommon in other Dutch cities) and maritime business.

Officially classed as the Netherland's 'second city', it's doesn't appear to be suffering much of a hangover from WWII when the whole city was virtually flattened. Unfortunately, you won't experience the usual classic medieval Dutch architecture but a more surprising hip, progressive and post-modern arena.

At its highest point the Netherlands rises to just 1,060ft (323 metres) making it ideal for those who prefer pedal power. The Dutch are obsessed with all things two wheeled, to them it's simply a way of life. We were here to learn why so many people choose the bicycle as their preferred from of transport and how easy is it to navigate the city by simple bicycle.

The sheer volume of cycling in Rotterdam is staggering, 80% of people own a bicycle, 160,000 (25%) Rotterdammers cycle daily and another 200,000 (32%) cycle on a weekly basis. Every day, 560,000 cycle trips are made in Rotterdam and bicycle use has increased by 60% over the past decade. Those figures are staggering and unsurprisingly matched across the Netherlands

I can imagine two of the most popular bike schemes in the city could cause confusion. Gobike – offers electric bikes making cycling through city an absolute breeze. The maximum pedalling speed is 24 km per hour. You simply grab one from the lending station and you deliver them back afterwards. With an annual subscription you can use Gobike for a year then in addition, you pay a fare. For more information, visit rotterdam.gobike.nl.

Mobike – Allows you to use an app to find the nearest bike. The bike is equipped with a smart lock that you simply 'open' with the phone. After use, you return the bike to any public bicycle parking space. By locking the bicycle you end the rental period. Users pay a deposit in addition to the fare.
More information: mobike.com/en

We chose to drive to allow us more freedom to explore at our own pace. The ferry from Harwich to Hoek of Holland with Stena Line is the cheapest, most leisurely and preferred way to travel. I suggest you invest in a cabin regardless if it's a day or overnight journey. The chance to relax in comfort is a great option. So, after a relaxing journey, including a

sublime lunch in the ships Metropolis restaurant, we arrived mid-afternoon greeted by vibrant sun and blue skies.

It is only a short drive (30km) from the port to the centre of Rotterdam and is easily manageable by bike (even better if you have a favourable wind on your back) following the 'Nieuwe Waterweg'. In no time we were on the hunt for our accommodation the SS Rotterdam. After several detours we stumbled apprehensively around a corner and suddenly there she was in all her imposing glory! There's no arguing, the city is dominated by the sea, classed as Europe's busiest port (and second in the World) and the water influences everything, even our hotel. The SS Rotterdam is moored in the heart of the city where the river Nieuwe Maas divides the northern and southern parts of the city. SS Rotterdam (3e Katendrechtse Hoofd 25, 3072 AM Rotterdam; +31 10 297 3090) is not just a hotel but a sumptuous juxtapose of luxurious comfort entwined tightly with a rich nautical heritage.

The steamship is the largest ocean-going steamer ever built in the Netherlands. After its launch in 1959, it became the flagship of the Holland America Line and sailed to many parts of the world. The ship is now permanently moored in Rotterdam's Maashaven (Meuse Harbour) near Katendrecht.

After a rapid check-in we went out to explore, our itinerary from Visit Holland was packed as always. First on the list was the Markthal (Ds. Jan Scharpstraat 298 3011 GZ Rotterdam; 030 234 6468) which is a residential and office building with a market hall underneath.

You'll find an indoor market hall in various world-class cities, but the combination with luxury housing makes Rotterdam's Markthal the first of its kind, and also includes the Tijdtrap: an exhibition of archaeological finds from mediaeval Rotterdam excavated during the building's construction, now on public display for free. It was Saturday and there was a bustling market taking place in the square outside, the cacophony of noise was overwhelming as well as the humidity. A short pedal

MM
INVIA NULLA VIA ET VENTE DEO

away was the Cube Houses (Overblaak 70, 3011 MH Rotterdam; +31 10 414 2285) which were designed asymmetrically to resemble an abstract forest, each triangular roof representing a treetop by Dutch architect Piet Blom. The residential development dominates the surroundings with its vibrant colour scheme and unusual cubes which are tilted over by 45 degrees. Curious visitors can learn more about these apartments by exploring the show Cube Museum (Kijk-Kubus) for a small fee (3 euros).

Cycling a section of the Maasparcours (www.rotterdam.nl/nieuwe-maasparcours) is a definite must, follow the Nieuwe Maas and it's impossible to get lost. The weather was glorious as I pedalled as close as possible to the waterfront, and there is great accessibility in both directions. Designed by the residents the route (Nieuwe Maas Trail) is 28 kilometres along and takes you along the north and south banks, along the Maastunnel in the west to the Van Brienenoord Bridge in the east. The city and the river show their impressive side all along this route. The route passes the which is home to one of the city's most iconic sights, the Rijnhavenbrug pedestrian and cyclists' bridge. Opened in 2012, it was immediately nicknamed in a typical Rotterdam fashion the "De Hoerenloper" ("To the hookers"), referring to the former red-light district in Kattendrecht.

One of the highlights was riding through the Maastunnel, which is the oldest traffic tunnel in the Netherlands and connects the two banks of the River 'Nieuwe Maas' (New Meuse). It was built from 1937 to 1942 and consists of two adjacent tubes for motor vehicles (2×2 lanes) and next to those there are two stacked tubes. One for pedestrians, on top of which there is one for cyclists. Motor vehicles reach the tubes via long access roads whilst pedestrians and cyclists enter their tunnel from an entirely different location by escalators. Therefore, as a cyclist you are oblivious to the fact that there is even a tunnel for motorised traffic. The bicycle tunnel

is 585 metres (640 yards) long and the deepest point of the tunnel is 20 metres (66ft) below the surface.

That evening we were treated to a gastronomic indulgence of all our senses at Las Palmas (Wilhelminakade 330 Ingang aan de, Otto Reuchlinweg, 3072 AR Rotterdam; +31 10 234 5122) which is a great, popular spot to eat. Having encountered a wonderful welcome from the attentive staff, we sat and admired the décor which is a fusion of industry and nature, complimented with delicious dishes (their speciality being seafood) and beautiful matching wines. It's obvious they are proud of the service they deliver and rightly so.

Next morning after a lazy breakfast we reluctantly jumped back into the car, the plan was to discover the Hoek van Holland Beach and cycle (hopefully dramatically) through the dunes. In the summer there is nothing as refreshing as water and there is plenty of that in Rotterdam! From the Nieuwe Maas River that flows right through the city to the lively city harbours, to the dunes that form a barrier to the sea and protect the land behind it that is often a lot lower than sea level.

Where the sea meets the land, so too do cyclists meet an invigorating experience. In no time at all we were sitting shoeless on the beach. Although Hoek van Holland is located 24 km west of Rotterdam City, it's an official suburb. The little village which is translated 'Corner of the Netherlands' marks the beginning of the enormous port of Rotterdam.

SS ROTTERDAM

Sea, beach, dunes, promenade, harbour, boulders and semi-naked tourists, the Hoek van Holland is a remarkably versatile place. In the summer it's a pleasant, bustling seaside resort, especially with kite surfers, but this diverse hinterland also attracts visitors throughout the year with great cultural offerings and plenty of maritime traffic breezing in and out of the port. It's a great place to cycle, with designated paths and plenty of places to relax and refresh. There was a welcoming breeze as I pedalled energetically along the sea wall.

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The beach is an industrial delight, the horizon dominated by metal structures and installations. The small village of Hoek van Holland village is only a stone's throw away from the Maeslant Storm Barrier that protects greater Rotterdam from flooding.

Those interested in World War II have the opportunity to cycle along what remains of the Atlantic wall (30 km), the German defence line from the Noordkaap to the Pyrenees, and see the 'Festung' (Fortress) Hoek van Holland. The route starts at the Hoek van Holland Fortress and makes use of junctions. A brochure is also available from the Hoek van Holland Tourist Office.

Back in the bustling city we stumbled upon 'The Giant of Rotterdam', a statue of the second-tallest Dutchman in history, a statue to the runner-up, it could only happen in the Netherlands. Regardless Rijnhout required about five times as much food as most men, and his poor family struggled to feed him growing up. Later, to remedy this, he rented some of his free time as a walking billboard for local companies.

The seven-foot, 6.5 inch giant was the second tallest Dutchman ever, after Albert Jan Kramer. He weighed over 500 pounds and wore size 29 shoes. Rijnhout suffered from acromegaly, a hormonal disorder in the pituitary gland. He seemed like an average baby when he was born in 1922, but by the time he was three years old, he'd begun to grow at an accelerated rate.

He became disabled after a bicycle accident (I can in some way relate to that) and remained in a wheelchair for the final years of his life. His health deteriorated, and he had to be lifted by a crane to the second floor of the hospital where he died from a pituitary tumour at 36 years old. In June 2011, a life-size bronze statue sculpted by artist Herman Lammers was unveiled in city to keep his legend going strong.

After a brief R&R moment, we headed out for the evening. The Witte de Withkwartier is the vibrant heart of the Rotterdam art scene and is known for its dynamic nightlife. Sometimes referred to as Rotterdam's 'Axis of Art', the Witte de Withstraat runs from Museumpark to the Maritime Museum and is lined with an abundance of cultural institutions. There is also a selection of boutique style shops and galleries open all day, however the focus shifts to cafés and restaurants in the evening. It's popular with the young and trendy crowd, who spill out on to the pavement from the designer bars to enjoy an alfresco drink.

The morning of our departure we travelled through the past history of the SS Rotterdam with one of the onboard tours available (for a charge). The enthusiastic guide lead us through the decks, nightclub, stylish halls and the authentic bridge, before we descended into the impressive engine room with its shiny chrome control panels and an abundance of green pipework. It was great to be able to see first-hand how much effort is required to get a ship the size of the SS Rotterdam out to sea.

Information

The Stena Line ferry to Holland from Harwich to the Hook of Holland is the most direct route to the Netherlands and Germany from the south of England. Choose from day and overnight sailings on their fantastic Superferries with Fares to Holland starting from £59 single for a car and driver or a Dutchflyer Rail and Sail ticket from £55. The onboard services provide you with entertainment during your ferry crossing on the route Hook of Holland – Harwich, whether you're travelling by day or travelling by night. The Superferries feature two restaurants, three bars, a coffee bar, an on-board shop, an internet room and even a cinema. Indulge yourself with an overnight private cabin with shower and toilet and experience luxury whilst at sea.

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CYCLING IN PENNSYLVANIA

It's early morning. The first warm glows of a rising sun dance across the magnificent waters of the Delaware River, glistening with a radiance that will only increase as the day goes on.

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As you go, you take in awe-inspiring scenery full of dramatic cliffs, acres of lavish forests and vistas sweeping out as far as the eye can see.

You hear the rush of the mighty Delaware River, you hear laughter and joy from the groups enjoying whitewater paddling, kayaking, and tubing, and you get up close and you get a front-row seat to see some of the United State's most spectacular creatures in their natural environment…

Sounds like a dream vacation?

Making that dream a bright reality is easier than you think.

At the historic 1740 House in New Hope, PA, our prime location close to a number of the area's best cycling routes makes us a popular choice for those planning a two-wheeled adventure of their own.

Here, we combine our own expert local knowledge with advice and top tips from some of our regular cycling vacation guests to provide you with this:

Your complete guide to cycling around the Delaware River.

Where to Ride

Whether you're a novice cyclist or a seasoned veteran, the area boasts a plethora of different routes to suit all abilities and all ages.

It would take us an entire book (or several!) to cover them all, so we've done the next best thing:

Rounded-up some of the top cycling spots that are essential for any vacation in the area.

Bull's Island Recreation Area

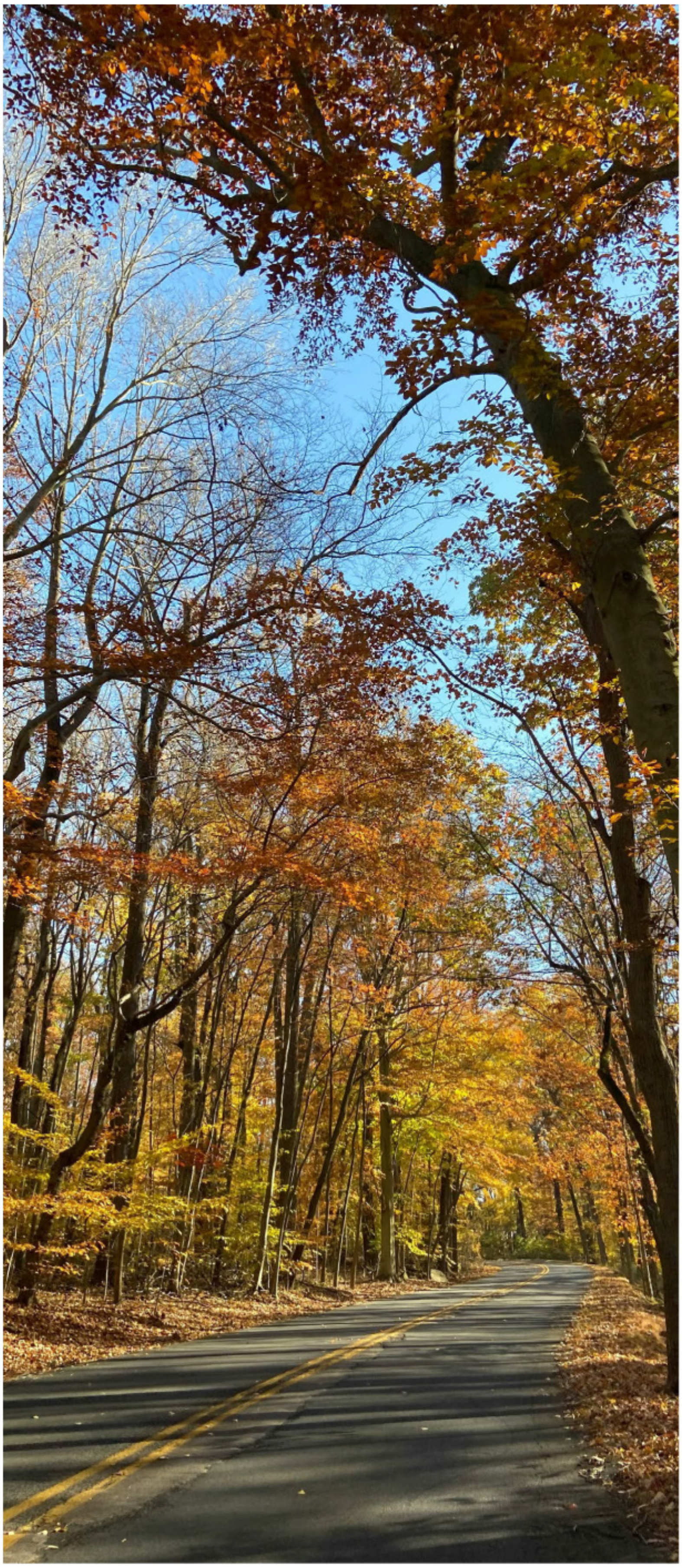
We start our adventure close to home, with a unique that takes us from Lumberville, PA into one of New Jersey's best-loved recreational areas.

Saddle up and head out from our hotel to the famous Lumberville–Raven Rock Bridge, where you'll have to dismount and walk your bike across into NJ.

The bridge, one of two pedestrian footbridges crossing the Delaware River, is an attraction in its own right. Year in, year out, it attracts scores of visitors who come not only for the novelty of walking from one state to the other via a footbridge, but for the truly spectacular views you'll encounter as you cross.

Reaching the other side of the bridge, you'll find yourself at Bull's Island Recreation Area.

From there, take the towpaths along the Delaware & Raritan Canal and journey off



along a trail which takes you into the heart of those very same forests you saw from the bridge earlier.

There, you'll find yourself surrounded by lofty sycamore trees and ancient silver maples, passing acres of unblemished tulips and all manner of rare fauna.

A gentle ride along the towpaths and surrounding areas before heading back up and over the bridge can prove to be the perfect day out for those who prefer to take things easy.

Meanwhile, more advanced riders will enjoy venturing off into the hills and tackling some of the tougher terrain surrounding the area.

Delaware Water Gap

Ask any experienced cyclist for their favourite cycling routes around Delaware River, and we'd be surprised if the answer was anything other than Delaware Water Gap.

Hugely popular among more advanced cyclists, the area offers exhilarating rides for both road bicycles and mountain/hybrid bikes alike.

For the latter, The McDade Recreational Trail covers almost the entire length of Delaware Water Gap, running alongside the river for 32 miles.

Whether it's an adrenaline-charged rush through the forests you're looking for, or a leisurely ride taking in delightful streams, vast fields and grand, sweeping vistas, the trail truly does offer it all.

If you prefer road biking routes, Old Mine Road on the New Jersey side of the park is just the thing.

Uhlerstown to Frenchtown Loop

The towpath trails along Delaware Canal State Park and Delaware & Raritan Canal State Park run parallel to the Delaware River itself and create a number of exciting loops.

Of these, it's the Uhlerstown to Frenchtown loop that gets our vote as a must-try for your next cycling vacation.

Clocking up a total of 18.9 miles, the round trip may not be the longest cycling route in the area, but it's certainly one of the most enchanting.

Crossing the Uhlerstown–Frenchtown Bridge (remember to dismount and walk your bike!), you'll again encounter truly stunning scenery at every turn, and all with the added bonus of being back in time for dinner.

What to See and Do

Sure, you'll be spending a lot of time in the saddle, but what about those moments when you want to give your legs a rest or simply try something different?

Luckily, the area is packed full of things to see, do and explore.

Here's just a few of our favourites.

Water Sports at Bull's Island

You can't come all the way up to the Delaware River without experiencing the thrill of taking to the open waters.

Several areas offer a wealth of opportunities to do just, but few quite beat Bull's Island Recreation Area.

Boating, kayaking, canoeing, tubing and rafting are all popular here. With equipment (including canoes, kayaks and tubes) available for hire in nearby Point Pleasant, a quick 12-minute bike ride from 1740 House.

Lakota Wolf Preserve

If you're planning to cycle around the Delaware Water Gap, you'll be delighted to find a number of leading attractions right at your feet.

If you only have time to do one of them, however, make it this one.

Situated less than four miles beyond the Gap itself, this is your chance to get up close and personal with some truly magnificent creatures in their natural environment.

Take note, however, that this isn't the kind of attraction you can simply ride up to whenever you feel like.

To see the wolves, you'll need to join one of the twice-daily tours that run seven days a week.

Pre-booking is essential for weekday tours, but not for weekends.

Pocono Snake and Animal Farm

Sticking with all things wild and wonderful, we next head to Pocono Snake and Animal Farm which you'll find a little over two miles from Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area.

Perfect for those of you bringing your young ones with you on vacation, the park features a huge collection of rare and exotic animals.

A 14-foot King Cobra and 23-foot Python are among some of the highlights, though younger visitors may simply enjoy feeding the monkeys

and petting rabbits.

Where to Eat

All that cycling can work up quite an appetite.

The good news is that no matter where your cycle ride along the Delaware River takes you, you're never too far from some seriously good eats.

The Landmark Restaurant

After taking on the trails around Delaware Water Gap, take a 1.5-mile detour to the acclaimed Landmark Restaurant in East Stroudsburg.

Serving up a truly mouthwatering menu for breakfast, lunch and dinner, The Landmark frequently earns rave reviews for its generous portions of delicious food, reasonable pricing and wonderful hospitality.

Village Farmer and Bakery

Prefer a sweet treat as a reward for all that cycling?

Look no further than the famous Village Farmer and Bakery.

As renowned for their exceptional apple pie as they are for a tantalising collection of cakes, cookies and other scrumptious goodies, dining here is definitely a can't-miss experience for your vacation.

Nina's Waffles and Ice Cream

The Village Farmer may be ideal if you're over the Delaware Water Gap area, but what about elsewhere?

Closer to the Bull's Island region, Nina's is the place to go for hand-crafted ice cream and wonderful waffles. As you tuck in, the aromas of freshly cooked waffles and the charming atmosphere will ensure the whole experience is the perfect end to a long day of riding.

The Club @ 1740 House

Last but by no means least, guests staying with us are always more than welcome to join us at our exclusive bar and restaurant, The Club @ 1740 House.

The Club is typically a members-only establishment, but hotel guests can join us Wednesdays-Sundays to enjoy a regularly-changing menu which offers modern takes on traditional dishes with a local feel, all served in beautiful, riverside surroundings.

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MAXIMISE SUMMER GAINS

How to Maintain Your Cycling Fitness

With summer 2025 in full swing, there's still plenty of time to enjoy long weekend rides, warm evening spins, and spontaneous hill sprints with friends. But as the daylight hours start to dwindle and the chill creeps back in, it's natural to wonder: how much fitness will you really lose if you're only able to ride once a week during the off-season?

The good news? Not as much as you might fear.

Research into detraining shows that while you could lose up to 10% of your VO_2 max power after four weeks of total inactivity, maintaining most of your summer fitness doesn't require a heroic effort. Just a single quality ride each week can make a big difference—especially if that ride includes some intensity.

Make the Most of the Summer While You Can

Now's the time to build a strong fitness base to carry you through winter. When possible, aim to ride both Saturday and Sunday. Try this weekly combo:

- Saturday: Keep it short and punchy. Add hill repeats or sprint efforts. Make it fun—race your riding buddies or chase street signs if you're solo.
- Sunday: Go long and steady. But don't completely drop the intensity—throw in a few bursts or climbs to keep your body working at a range of outputs.

Remember, maintaining intensity—even with shorter ride durations—is key to holding onto fitness when your weekly mileage drops.

When Weeknight Rides Get Dark

As daylight fades, weeknight riding can become trickier. If you have lights and safe, well-lit roads, a steady ride in Zone 3 (roughly 30–40 bpm below your max heart rate) for about an hour is ideal. Avoid full-gas intervals in the dark—they come with unnecessary risk. Stick to a controlled, brisk tempo and make sure your lights are powerful enough to ride confidently at speed.

Also, keep distractions to a minimum. Glancing at your bike computer for heart rate or speed? Do it quickly. At 20+ mph in low-light conditions, even a second or two with your eyes off the road is risky.

No Time or Conditions for Riding? Cross-Train Smart

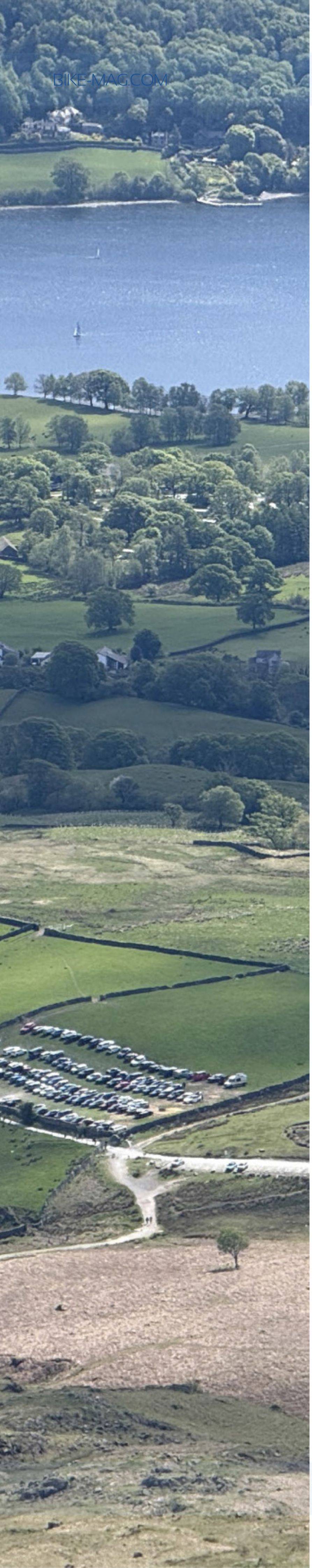
If commuting isn't an option and outdoor riding becomes difficult, look to cross-training to keep that summer strength alive. Back in the '80s, cyclists filled their off-seasons with running, weight training, circuits, and even swimming. And while that old-school grind included zero rest days (not recommended now), there's still value in variety.

Cross-training can be incredibly effective—but be cautious. Cyclists often have strong cardiovascular engines but limited mobility or running-specific strength. Jumping into high-impact activities too fast can lead to injury. Ease into new routines and listen to your body.

Next month, we'll dive into gear tips and smart equipment plus how to use indoor cycling strategically to boost both endurance and speed as we head into the new year.

Stay strong, ride smart, and enjoy every last drop of summer sunshine.

CYCLING THE LAKE DISTRICT



A 2025 Guide to the Tour of Britain's Most Scenic Stage

The Lake District, with its rugged fells, serene lakes, and winding country lanes, has long been a haven for cyclists. In 2019, the Tour of Britain showcased one of its most picturesque stages, traversing from Barrow-in-Furness to Whinlatter Pass. As we revisit this iconic route in 2025, it offers both seasoned cyclists and enthusiastic amateurs an opportunity to experience the beauty and challenge of this storied landscape.

Stage Overview: Barrow-in-Furness to Whinlatter Pass

The 2019 Tour of Britain's Lake District stage spanned approximately 105 miles, commencing in the industrial town of Barrow-in-Furness and culminating at the ascent of Whinlatter Pass near Keswick. While professional cyclists completed this stage in just under four hours, recreational riders should anticipate a full day's journey, allowing time to absorb the stunning vistas and perhaps indulge in local delicacies along the way.

Route Breakdown and Highlights

Barrow-in-Furness to Ulverston

Departing from Barrow-in-Furness, the route initially skirts the edge of Morecambe Bay, offering glimpses of tidal flats and distant hills. The terrain here is relatively flat, providing a gentle warm-up as you head northeast towards Ulverston, a charming market town known for its cobbled streets and the Laurel and Hardy Museum.

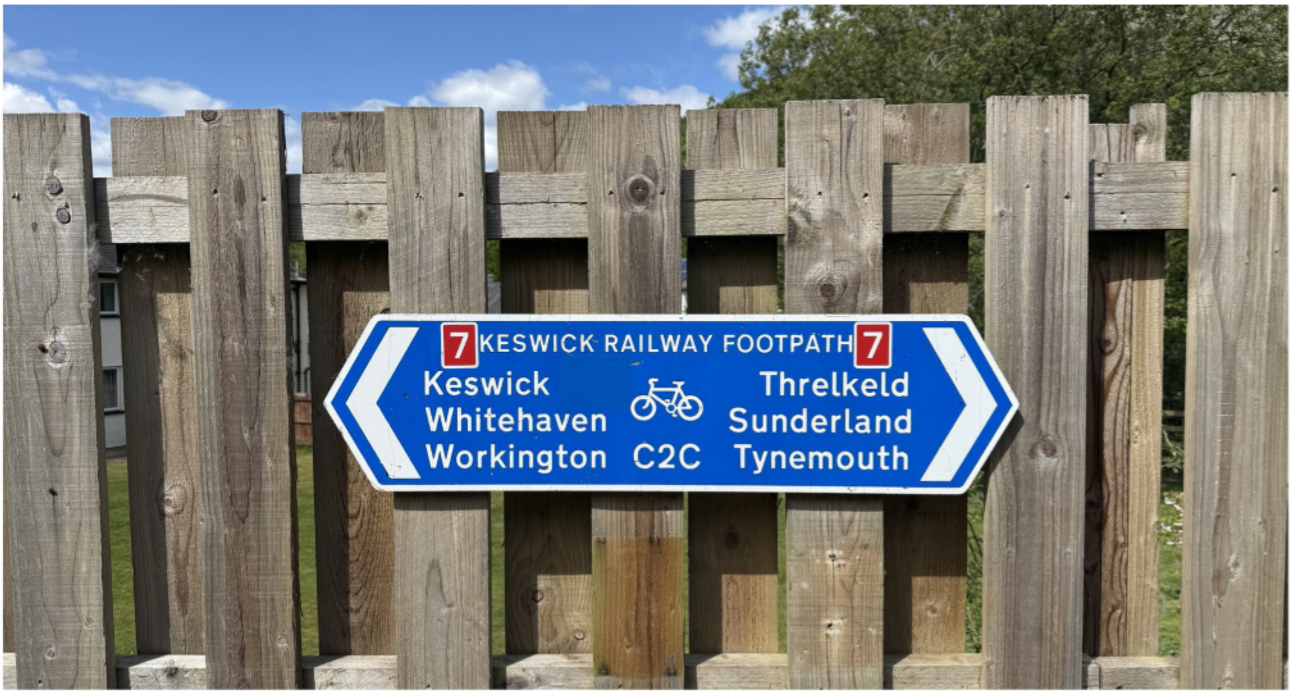
Ulverston to Coniston Water

Leaving Ulverston, the landscape begins to undulate, with rolling hills leading you into the heart of the Lake District. The route meanders through verdant farmland and pastures, eventually bringing you to the shores of Coniston Water. This lake, the third-largest in the district, is flanked by wooded hills and offers serene views that are quintessentially Lakeland.

Castlerigg
Stone Circle
Off-road
C2C
C2C
7

Coniston to Ambleside

Continuing north, the road ascends gently towards Ambleside, a bustling town nestled at the head of Windermere. Along the way, you'll pass through Hawkshead, a village steeped in literary history, having been home to both Beatrix Potter and William Wordsworth. Ambleside itself is a hub for outdoor enthusiasts, with numerous cafés and shops catering to cyclists and hikers alike.



Ambleside to Grasmere

From Ambleside, the route takes you along the A591, a scenic road that offers sweeping views of Rydal Water and Grasmere. Grasmere, often referred to as the "jewel of the Lake District," is famed for its association with Wordsworth and its world-renowned gingerbread. A stop here is almost obligatory, whether to visit Dove Cottage or to sample the sweet treats from the Grasmere Gingerbread Shop.

Grasmere to Keswick via Dunmail Raise

Leaving Grasmere, the climb up Dunmail Raise awaits—a steady ascent that rewards with panoramic views of the surrounding fells. Descending into the Thirlmere valley, the route offers a relatively flat stretch alongside the reservoir, flanked by dense forests and the imposing Helvellyn range. As you approach Keswick, the landscape opens up, revealing the expanse of Derwentwater and the town's welcoming atmosphere.

Keswick to Whinlatter Pass

The final leg of the journey leads west from Keswick towards Whinlatter Pass. This ascent, while less steep than some of its counterparts like Hardknott or Wrynose, still presents a formidable challenge with gradients reaching up to 10%. The climb is set amidst the Whinlatter Forest, England's only true mountain forest, offering a unique blend of coniferous woodland and mountainous terrain. At the summit, the Whinlatter Forest Park provides a perfect spot to rest and reflect on the journey.

Alternative Routes and Detours

For those seeking variations or shorter rides, the Lake District offers numerous alternatives:

- Keswick to Threlkeld Trail: A 6.4-mile round trip along a former railway line, this traffic-free path is ideal for families or those seeking a leisurely ride with stunning views of the River Greta.
- Windermere Ferry Loop: A 40-mile circuit around Lake Windermere, incorporating a ferry crossing and passing through Bowness and Sawrey. This route combines quiet country lanes with picturesque lake views.
- Grizedale Forest Trails: For mountain biking enthusiasts, Grizedale Forest offers a range of trails, from the family-friendly Goosey Foot Tarn Trail to the challenging North Face Trail.

Challenging Climbs for the Adventurous

The Lake District is renowned for its steep passes, attracting cyclists eager to test their mettle:

- Hardknott Pass: Often cited as the steepest road in England, with gradients up to 30%, this pass is a true test of strength

BIKE

and endurance. The ascent from Eskdale is particularly brutal, but the panoramic views from the summit are unparalleled.

- Wrynose Pass: Connecting with Hardknott, Wrynose offers its own set of challenges, with sharp hairpin bends and gradients reaching 25%. The climb is shorter but equally demanding.
- Honister Pass: Linking Borrowdale and Buttermere, this pass features a steady climb with sections exceeding 20% gradient. The descent into Buttermere is exhilarating, with sweeping views of the surrounding fells.

Accommodation and Refueling Stops

The Lake District boasts a plethora of cyclist-friendly accommodations and eateries:

- Abbey House Hotel, Barrow-in-Furness: Located near the start of the route, this hotel offers spacious rooms, hearty breakfasts, and secure bike storage.
- The Cottage in the Wood, Braithwaite: Situated near Whinlatter Pass, this inn provides comfortable lodging and a menu featuring locally sourced ingredients, perfect for a post-ride meal.
- Croft House Farm Café, Buttermere: A popular stop for cyclists tackling the Newlands Pass, offering homemade cakes and panoramic views.

Practical Tips for Cyclists

- Weather Preparedness: The Lake District's weather is notoriously unpredictable. Always carry waterproof gear and check forecasts before setting out.

- Navigation: While many routes are signposted, having a GPS device or detailed map is advisable, especially when venturing onto lesser-known paths.
- Bike Maintenance: Ensure your bike is in good condition, with brakes and gears functioning optimally, particularly if you plan to tackle the steeper passes.
- Local Etiquette: Be mindful of other road users, including walkers and livestock. Adhere to the countryside code and respect private property.

Conclusion

Cycling through the Lake District offers an unparalleled blend of physical challenge and natural beauty. Revisiting the 2019 Tour of Britain stage provides a structured yet flexible route that showcases the region's diverse landscapes—from coastal plains to mountainous passes. Whether you're a seasoned cyclist seeking to conquer the steepest climbs or a leisure rider looking to immerse yourself in tranquil scenery, the Lake District in 2025 remains a premier destination for two-wheeled adventures.

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A SEASIDE SPIN

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Cycling from Blackpool to Fleetwood in 2025

By Benjamin Easterley

Distance: 11 miles (one-way)

Route: Blackpool South Pier to The Esplanade, Fleetwood

Grade: Easy to Moderate

Surface: Mostly flat, fully paved, traffic-free for the majority

Access: Multiple train stations nearby – Blackpool North, Blackpool South, Blackpool Pleasure Beach

If you're searching for a relaxed, traffic-free coastal ride packed with visual drama, nostalgic charm, and wide-open skies, the 11-mile promenade route from Blackpool to Fleetwood is one of the finest in the northwest. Revamped and well-maintained in recent years, this seafront path is a showcase of how towns can embrace active travel. And thanks to improved signage, smoother surfacing, and dedicated cycle facilities, it's a pleasure for families, leisure riders, and seasoned cyclists alike.

Starting Point: Blackpool South Pier

Begin your ride at South Pier, where the iconic sights, sounds, and smells of Blackpool set the scene. There's a buzz in the air as rollercoasters from the Pleasure Beach roar nearby and trams slide past with their signature chimes. Don't be surprised if you start your journey to the soundtrack of fairground music, sea gulls, and excited laughter—it's all part of the experience.

Set your wheels rolling north on the expansive promenade path. This shared-use route is generous in width, well-signposted, and kept in excellent condition. In summer, expect a good mix of walkers, joggers, and cyclists, with enough space to ride comfortably. Blackpool Council has done a great job of making the promenade bike-friendly, with consistent surface quality and clearly designated cycling areas.

The Golden Mile and Blackpool Tower

As you head toward the legendary Blackpool Tower, the promenade offers sensory overload. Candyfloss vendors, amusement arcades, and street performers add energy to the ride, especially during the Blackpool Illuminations, when over a million bulbs turn the seafront into a glowing spectacle.

The Tower is an ideal early photo stop—and a reminder of just how grand Blackpool once was (and still is, in a gloriously retro way). Stop at one of the ornate Victorian shelters scattered along the way for a breather and a look out over the Irish Sea. If the sky's clear, you may even catch sight of the Welsh mountains across the water.

North Shore to Bispham and Cleveleys

Beyond the main tourist stretch, the path becomes more serene. The energy of central Blackpool fades, replaced by windswept beaches and quieter promenades. Around Bispham and Anchorsholme, the scenery opens up, and the route becomes more relaxing and rhythmical. This section of the promenade has been re-engineered for both sea defense and recreational use—perfect for cruising along with a tailwind.

NOUGAT
Clotted Cream
FUDGES
FUDGES
BUMPER BARGAIN BAG

Soon, you'll roll into Cleveleys, a charming coastal town with wide walkways and a striking stretch of modern promenade design. Pause here if you like—you'll find cafés, sculptures, and benches for taking in views of the Isle of Man on a clear day. Cleveleys is also home to some clever coastal artworks, including the mythical-themed Sea Swallow sculptures, part of the Mythic Coast Trail.

Rossall Beach and the Quiet Stretch

Just past Cleveleys, at Rossall Beach, the path narrows briefly. There's a very short on-road section here—or you can dismount and walk along the shingle-lined beachfront promenade. It's worth the slight pause: this is one of the most peaceful sections of the ride, with sweeping views north to the Lake District fells. The tranquility of the shoreline contrasts sharply with Blackpool's liveliness, and many riders choose to stop here for a drink or a snack.

Rossall Point Tower – The High Point

The route's literal and metaphorical high point is Rossall Point Tower, a striking, tilted observation building that looks like it's straining toward the sea. Cyclists are welcome to stop, lock up bikes, and climb to the top deck, where panoramic views take in Morecambe Bay, the Forest of Bowland, and the Cumbrian mountains. It's a wonderful spot for a quiet moment or a well-earned photo.

Rolling Into Fleetwood

From here, it's an easy final descent past Marine Hall Gardens, where beach huts in cheerful pastel shades line the seafront. You'll arrive at The Esplanade in Fleetwood—look for the distinctive white Lower Lighthouse, a beautiful structure marking the end of the ride.

If you're feeling adventurous, the Fleetwood Ferry (bikes allowed) crosses the River Wyre to Knott End-on-Sea in about 10 minutes - offering more riding options northward into rural Lancashire.

Getting There

You can start the ride at several access points. Blackpool South, North, and Pleasure Beach train stations all offer good rail links with Northern services. Bring your bike or use Bike & Go at Blackpool North if you prefer to hire (check availability in advance).

Eat & Drink

Pre-ride fuelling is easy in Blackpool. Grab coffee and cake at the elegant Parks Art Deco Café in Stanley Park or go classic with Harry Ramsden's fish and chips. At the finish, try Beachside Café in Fleetwood for seafront views, or head into town for the reliable Granada Fish Bar or Café Royal.

Accommodation

Staying overnight? Try the Queens Promenade Hotel in Blackpool - a cyclist-friendly base with seafront views and secure bike storage.

Ride Extensions and Loops

This route is great as an out-and-back ride (22 miles return), but if you're looking to extend, NCN Route 62 picks up near South Pier and heads south through Lytham St Annes, offering more coast-hugging miles and links to longer journeys inland.

For seasoned cyclists, loop inland via the Wyre Estuary Country Park or head toward Lancaster using NCN Route 700, though this involves a mix of on-road and traffic-free sections.

Cycling from Blackpool to Fleetwood in 2025 is not just a pleasant ride - it's a lesson in how coastal towns can prioritise active travel without losing their charm. It blends spectacle with solitude, old-school British seaside fun with natural beauty, and it's all done on two wheels, away from the chaos of traffic.

Whether you're a visiting tourist with an hour to spare, a local on a Sunday spin, or a family out for a day in the fresh air, this ride offers the perfect mix of accessibility, scenery, and pure seaside joy.

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SADDLE UP *AND* STAY ROLLING

Discover Cycling in Lancashire

Whether you're into leisurely spins along scenic towpaths or crave the buzz of mountain biking through rugged terrain, Lancashire is a cyclist's dream. From family-friendly coastal cruises to pulse-pounding forest trails, the county offers an unbeatable range of routes that blend natural beauty, historic charm, and modern adventure.

Riding Through Lancashire: A Modern Cyclist’s Playground

There’s never been a better time to hop on your bike and explore Lancashire. With its mix of traffic-free tracks, challenging climbs, and meandering country lanes, the county caters to everyone from weekend pootlers to seasoned roadies and trail junkies. It’s not just about getting from A to B - here, the journey is the destination.

To the west, you’ll find flat, open expanses and quiet rural lanes that connect charming villages, farmland, and the characterful coastal towns of the Fylde. These are routes made for soaking up the views, stopping at a local café, and taking life at your own pace.

But head inland, and the landscape shifts. Climb into the heart of Lancashire where the terrain starts to bite. Conquer the legendary Trough of Bowland - a rite of passage for many cyclists - or snake through the Pennine Hills, where each bend reveals another jaw-dropping vista. Want drama? Pedal along the Ribble and Lune valleys, where river views and timeless countryside steal the show.

Get Off the Tarmac and Into the Wild

If gravel, mud, and adrenaline are more your style, Lancashire won’t disappoint. Gisburn Forest is a go-to destination for off-road enthusiasts. Here, you’ll find everything from swooping blue trails to red and black runs that test even experienced riders. Drop into fast descents, hit the jumps, and wind through dense woodland – it’s pure trail nirvana.

Up for something truly extreme? Lee Quarry in Rossendale is not for the faint-hearted. This rugged, purpose-built mountain biking site offers around 10km of technical red and black trails, two pump tracks, and a slew of trials sections. Brutal, rocky, and unforgiving - this is where gravity riders come to play. Feeling tough? Link it up with a ride to Cragg Quarry for a full-on day of riding.

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Pedal-Friendly Paths for All

Not everyone is chasing KOMs or full-face thrills. For family outings or relaxed rides, Lancashire's coast and canal routes offer a welcome escape. Take a gentle cruise along Blackpool's promenade, where the sea breeze and iconic views - including Blackpool Tower, the Pleasure Beach, and the colourful Comedy Carpet - create the perfect backdrop for a carefree day on two wheels.

Further north, discover the natural wonder that is Morecambe Bay. The award-winning Bay Cycle Way stretches over 130km of mostly flat, well-signed trail, ideal for new riders or anyone wanting to explore at their own pace. With views across the Irish Sea, stop-off points for a proper brew, and easy access to local food, this route proves cycling doesn't have to mean suffering to be sublime.

Epic Tours and Day-Long Loops

Want to turn your ride into a proper adventure? Start with the Grand Tour of West Lancashire. This 65km circular route weaves together highlights of the region, starting from any of three convenient train stations: Town Green, Rufford, or New Lane. You'll pedal through lush farmland, historic towns, and stretches of the mighty Leeds-Liverpool Canal - a feat of engineering from Britain's industrial past.

But for those with serious stamina, the Lancashire Cycleway is the ultimate challenge. At 418km long, this iconic route is made up of two circular loops that meet at Whalley, deep in the Ribble Valley. Whether you tackle it as one epic journey or break it into sections, you'll experience Lancashire in all its glory: from the remote Bowland Hills to the tranquil lanes of the Fylde, and the high ridges of the West Pennine Moors.

Cycle-Friendly Stays and Pit Stops

Planning to make a weekend (or a week) of it? Lancashire is ready. Over 40 accommodations across the county proudly carry the 'Welcome Cyclists' marque. These bike-friendly stays offer the essentials that matter to riders - secure storage, drying rooms, route maps, and sometimes even on-site bike hire and repairs.

Looking for comfort and character? Try Stirk House Hotel near Clitheroe, a multi-award-winning stay on the edge of Gisburn Forest. For rural charm, Martin Lane Farm Cottages in Burscough blend four- and five-star self-catering luxury with excellent proximity to the west coast trails. Or base yourself at Blacksmiths Cottage near Pendle Hill, a great launchpad for exploring East Lancashire.

If you're in the mood for canal-side vibes, The Boatyard in Riley Green offers a perfect pitstop with quick links to Blackburn, Chorley, and Preston.

No Bike? No Problem

You don't have to bring your own wheels to get rolling. Lancashire boasts an accessible cycle hire network. In West Lancashire, you can grab a bike from £1 per hour from automated stations located at spots like Ormskirk Park Pool, Edge Hill University, and Burscough Wharf.

For a more extensive selection, On Yer Bike Cycles in Burnley rents out everything from road bikes and mountain rigs to e-bikes and tandems. Need to link rail travel with your ride? Bike and Go at Blackpool North Station makes it easy to travel light and still explore on two wheels.

Why Lancashire is Pedal Perfect

What sets Lancashire apart is its diversity. You're never far from a fresh route, a new challenge, or a hidden gem café serving the best brew and cake this side of the Pennines. The landscape changes quickly here - from sweeping seascapes to wild forest and postcard villages - and the infrastructure is spot on, whether you're riding solo, with mates, or with the kids in tow.

Add in dedicated cycling events, community rides, and an ever-growing network of signed routes, and it's clear why Lancashire is one of the UK's top destinations for anyone with a love of life on two wheels.

Ready to ride? Find your next cycling route, event or bike-friendly stay at VisitLancashire.com/cycle

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